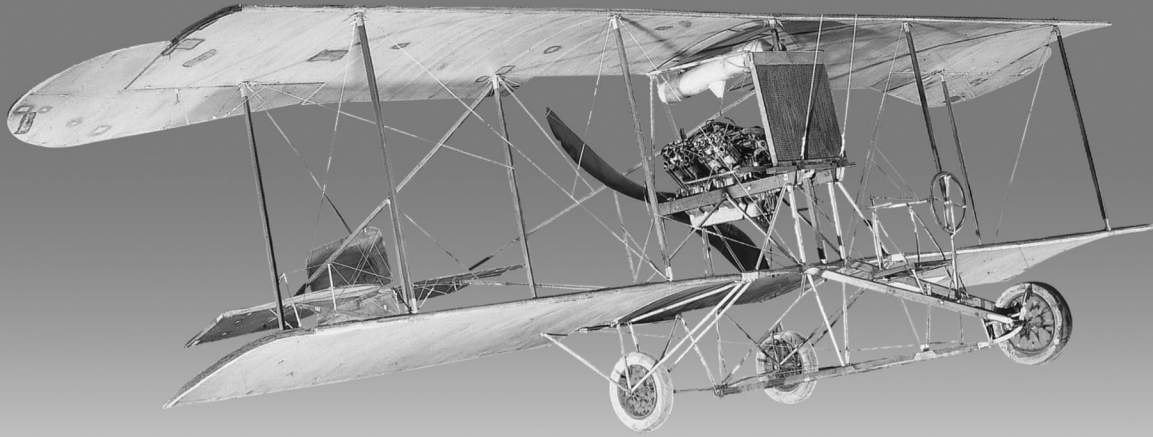


By the Kansas State Historical Society



Air Travel

Airplanes connect Kansas to the rest of the country and to the world. People rely on airplanes to take them places fast. A person can get on a plane in Wichita and fly to New York City and return home the same day. Airmail is used to get packages across the country in less than 24 hours. However, people and things did not always travel that fast.

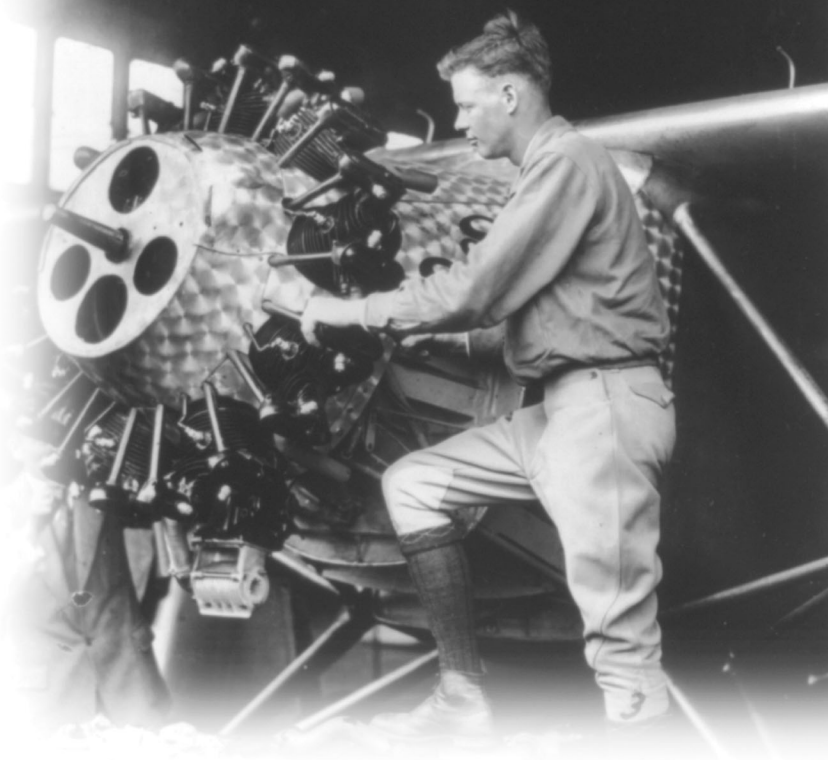
What was it like around 1925? Things were much different then. There were no big airplanes. There were no big airports. In the 1910s and 1920s, most people did not see how airplanes could be useful. They were fun to watch. They could do tricks, but they were small and could not go very far. There were few places for airplanes to land.



Charles Lindbergh helped change this. In 1927 he became the first person to fly across the Atlantic Ocean all by himself. It took Lindbergh 33½ hours to fly from New York to Paris. In comparison, today that same trip takes about 8 hours. Later he traveled to all 48 states in his airplane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*. He used his fame to help people think about commercial air travel. He encouraged communities to build airports so more people could travel by airplane.

So how did Charles Lindbergh find his way around the country? Like other pilots of the day, he flew close to the ground so he could see buildings and roads. He often followed railroad tracks. As he traveled, Lindbergh suggested that every town paint an arrow on the top of their railroad depot. It should point to the north. He wanted people to paint the name of their town on the roof, too. Almost 8,000 towns did just that!

In the 1920s most people thought airplanes were not important. But Charles Lindbergh and other supporters of air travel had other ideas. They could see that some day airplanes would be used to move people and things. They knew people would pay to travel fast. They were right! Today there are 19,815 airports just in the United States, and more than 50,000 in the world.



Charles Lindbergh